

FACTS ABOUT EBOLA HEMORRHAGIC FEVER

The first Ebola virus species was discovered in 1976 in what is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo near the Ebola River. Since then, outbreaks have appeared sporadically. The natural reservoir host of ebola viruses remains unknown. However, on the basis of available evidence and the nature of similar viruses, researchers believe that the virus is zoonotic (animal-borne) with bats being the most likely reservoir. Four of the five subtypes occur in an animal host native to Africa.

Infection and transmission

Humans can only transmit the virus to other humans when they are experiencing symptoms of the disease. There are several ways in which the virus can be transmitted to others. These include:

- direct contact with the blood or secretions of an infected person
- exposure to objects (such as needles) that have been contaminated with infected secretions

The Ebola virus is NOT airborne so cannot be transmitted by air droplets, sneezing, coughing, or touching someone, who is NOT exhibiting symptoms.

Exposure to someone with Ebola virus, not experiencing symptoms through casual contact, such as sitting next to someone in an airplane, bus, elevator or walking in close proximity to a person will not cause infection. The people at risk of being infected with the virus are those (family, friends and healthcare workers) that have direct contact with bodily fluids (blood, vomitus, stool) of an ill person, usually when providing supportive care..

For this reason, it is extremely important that personal protection equipment such as isolation gown, gloves, goggles and face masks are worn by any person providing care to someone suspected of having an Ebola illness.

Symptoms

Symptoms may appear anywhere from 2 to 21 days after exposure to Ebola virus though 8-10 days is most common. In addition, these symptoms are typical of other tropical disease such a Malaria and Dengue Fever.

The symptoms typically include:

- Fever
- Headache
- Joint and muscle aches
- Weakness
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Stomach pain
- Lack of appetite

In addition, some people may experience these other symptoms:

- A Rash
- Red Eyes
- Hiccups
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Bleeding inside and outside of the body
- Chest pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty swallowing

Testing and Treatment

There is a blood test for Ebola Virus but it is a very complex test that can only be processed in a specialized laboratory. *Only persons, who are deemed to be at high risk for Ebola virus infection (as determined by Infectious Disease doctors), will be tested for Ebola infection.* Testing is available in Gabon at the Centre International de Recherches Medicales de Franceville in addition to the Centers for Disease Control.

There is NO vaccine or specific medication to cure Ebola. Only treatment is supportive care, such as intravenous therapy and medication for pain and fever reduction. While an “antibody” cocktail has been administered to two American Humanitarian Workers sickened by the Ebola Virus in Liberia, this medication is still considered “experimental” and not widely available at this time.

Prognosis

The current death rate from Ebola virus has been reported just over 55%. Some who become sick with Ebola HF are able to recover, while others do not. The reasons behind this are not yet fully understood. However, it is known that patients who die usually have not developed a significant immune response to the virus at the time of death.

For further questions or up to date information, please consult the CDC or WHO website at the following

<http://www.cdc.gov/vhf/ebola/index.html>

<http://www.who.int/csr/disease/ebola/en/>